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REPORT OF THE JOINT CENSUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
OF THE AMERICAN STATISTICAL AND AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATIONS

In the autumn of 1918 it was brought to the attention of the Secretary of Commerce that events of the past few years had not tended to increase the confidence existing between the Bureau of the Census and the American Statistical Association and the American Economic Association, the two scientific organizations most directly interested in the Census Bureau and its product, but that these associations had in fact been inclined to adopt a critical attitude toward the Bureau. Accordingly, in order to restore confidence and increase coöperation and efficiency, the Secretary of Commerce, with the cordial assistance and approval of the Director of the Census, on November 18, 1918, addressed an identical letter to Dr. Wesley C. Mitchell, President of the American Statistical Association, and Professor Irving Fisher, President of the American Economic Association. This letter was as follows:

November 18, 1918.

My dear Sir:

As you are doubtless aware a Bill authorizing the Fourteenth Census to be taken as of the year 1920 has passed the House of Representatives and is pending in the Senate. We have sufficient confidence in its probable passage in substantially its existing form to warrant our addressing you on behalf of the Bureau of the Census and of the Department of Commerce as below.

It is the earnest desire of the Director of the Census that the Fourteenth Census shall mark a definite advance in quality, promptness, and in the effectiveness of the work done. The legislation has, therefore, been drawn after careful study of the previous legislation, after conference with those who have taken part in earlier work of the kind and with the approval of the Civil Service Commission in the portions which fall under the purview of that body.

The step we now desire to take is to tie up the work of this census to the best scientific thought and practice as represented through your Association and the American Economic Association. Consequently this letter is addressed to you and a letter of like tenor and date is sent to Prof. Irving Fisher, President of the American Economic Association, to request that you appoint a committee of your body to be advisory to the Director of the Census and the Department of Commerce in connection with the work of the Fourteenth Census. We suggest for your consideration a committee of three but are not particular as to the exact number save that it should be of such moderate size as to be efficient in its work.

We should deem it a pleasure, were such a committee appointed, to have it confer with the Director of the Census both before and during the work of the census itself, and careful consideration will be gladly given to the suggestions such a committee might think well to make.

Awaiting what I trust will be a favorable reply, I am,

Yours very truly,

WILLIAM C. REDFIELD,
Secretary.

Upon receipt of this letter by the officers of the two associations it was at once recognized that this joint committee might be of much practical assistance to the bureau in confronting the great task of organizing and taking the Fourteenth Census. It was also believed that in the event of successful coöperation the example and precedent of an effective advisory committee would be likely to prove of great im-

portance to the government in leading to similar relationships between other government bureaus and scientific associations or private organizations. One of the important developments of the war had been the sudden and close collaboration between the government and scientific and industrial interests of the nation made necessary during the emergency period, and it was pointed out by men of standing, who had come to Washington solely to be of assistance to the government, that the time was favorable for encouraging similar coöperation in connection with a recurring and distinctly peace function of the government. It was recognized that of all the peacetime activities of the federal government, taking and compiling the census was the largest.

Accordingly, at the annual meeting of the two associations both held in Richmond the following month (December 27), a cordial response was made to this request.

The Joint Advisory Committee appointed was as follows: Representing the American Economic Association, Professor Walter F. Willcox, Professor Edwin R. A. Seligman, and Dr. Wesley C. Mitchell; representing the American Statistical Association, Professor Carroll W. Doten, Dean Edwin F. Gay, and Mr. William S. Rossiter.

Each member of the joint committee was considered to be especially qualified by his experience or work, or both, to be of practical assistance to the bureau.

At the time of the appointment of the committee, Messrs. Gay, Doten, Mitchell, and Rossiter were still engaged in war work of a statistical or economic sort, and were therefore available in Washington for service on the committee. By an agreement between the members and the director, approved by the department, the other two members not then in the federal service were appointed special agents of the census at a salary of \$1 per annum to permit payment of travelling expenses and a small part of their living expenses during the meetings of the committee. As rapidly as the other members retired from active government service, which occurred between February and June, 1919, they were one by one placed upon the same basis, so that by July all were accredited as special agents of the census without compensation.

The first meeting of the Advisory Committee was held February 10 and 11, 1919. Mr. Rossiter was elected chairman. The Secretary of Commerce and the Director of the Census outlined the problems of the bureau, and the committee took up the consideration of general questions submitted to it, which naturally related to the preliminary organization of the work in anticipation of the enactment of the Fourteenth Census Law, then ready for passage by Congress.

MEETINGS HELD

Meetings of the joint committee have all been held in Washington. Thus far there have been seven, on February 10, February 27, March 21, April 18, May 23, June 27, and October 31. Each meeting has

covered two days, so that from the organization of the joint committee up to the date of the preparation of this report, the committee has devoted fourteen working days to its task. It has been customary to hold morning and afternoon sessions on each of the two days of the meetings and on an average twelve hours have been spent at each meeting. The meetings have been faithfully attended; at all of them at least five members were present, and at three the entire membership have been in attendance. This record of attendance was accomplished oftentimes at great personal inconvenience.

Believing that systematic conduct of committee affairs was one essential to success, the committee requested the director to assign an expert statistical clerk familiar with census operations and publications to act as secretary. This was promptly done, and Miss Mary F. Griffin, an editorial expert of the Division of Revision and Results, was assigned to this service. Miss Griffin has had charge of the preparation of proceedings and various memoranda and of much of the committee's correspondence.

In general the opening session of each meeting of the joint committee has been occupied with conferences with the director, statisticians, and other officials concerned with such subjects as were under consideration. These conferences have been followed by general discussion leading to the adoption of recommendations to the Bureau, which after the close of the meeting were transmitted to the director.

SCOPE OF THE COMMITTEE WORK

The early meetings of the committee naturally were occupied largely with conferences with the director or bureau officials concerning plans, scope of the coming enumeration, and problems of administration. While the committee was eager to aid in any manner, in searching for the opportunity for greatest usefulness, it took the position that administrative details and policies were the concern less of the committee than the statistical product itself—especially the method of presentation and manner of distribution. Obviously, the former task is distinctly that of the officials in charge, for which they are responsible to the President and Congress. Hence after the earlier meetings the committee gave consideration to the administrative side of the office only to the extent of assuring itself that the work was proceeding in such a way that the product would not be impaired. Some consideration was given (at the director's suggestion) to the problem of securing a suitable card punch, but the committee's advice was not accepted. It became increasingly evident that in a careful, well worked out plan of form and content of census published results lay the principal possibilities of committee service. Other recommendations in considerable numbers were made and it is hoped were useful, but in submitting those relating to form and content the committee believes that it has been able to aid the bureau to effect real reforms.

ANALYSIS OF RECOMMENDATIONS SUBMITTED

The deliberations of the committee took concrete form in 39 resolutions. These relate to the following subjects: Organization of personnel, 6; preliminary work in general, 3; mechanical devices proposed for use in the next census, 4; the population schedule and segregation of urban and rural populations, 6; the classification of occupations, 2 (comprising 13 subdivisions); schedules for manufacturing industries, 2; the agricultural schedules and the work of the division of agriculture, 4; order of publication and content of census reports, 7; methods of presentation and distribution of the results, 2 (comprising 9 subdivisions); miscellaneous, 3.

The Director of the Census welcomed the opinions of the Advisory Committee. He has extended every facility to the committee in his power, and he expresses very earnestly his desire to secure the co-operation of the American Statistical and American Economic Associations in making the work of the bureau most effective. To each recommendation of the committee the director has made response in writing. He has either accepted the committee's judgment or has promised to give attention to the suggestions made. Of the 39 recommendations made¹ 17 have been substantially approved and adopted by the bureau; 6 have not been concurred in; and 13 seem not yet to have been acted upon. Three others were of such a nature that no definite action was called for. Several of those in the unacted-on group could not be satisfactorily disposed of without considerable time and thought, but the more important have practically been accepted. This group includes the recent series dealing with the general subjects of content and methods of presentation and distribution.

The space occupied by the series of recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Director of the Census forbids inclusion in the body of this report of progress.²

CONTENT AND PUBLICATION POLICY

Reference to recommendations, 20, 30, 32, 33, 34, 38 and 39 will make evident the particular stress laid by the committee upon the necessity for speed of publication of census material. This need appears to the committee the more urgent in view of the long delay in publishing the results of the Thirteenth Census. To aid in securing this object the committee, after mature deliberation, emphatically recommended that the director adopt the policy (outlined in recom-

¹ Recommendations of the Committee:

A. Substantially approved and adopted: 1, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 20, 26, 7(a), 18(1), and 28(2).

B. Approved but not finally disposed of: 5, 15, 21.

C. Not concurred in: 12, 22, 24, 29, 7(b), 7(c), and 18(2).

D. Not yet acted upon: 23, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 18(3), 28(1).

E. No specific action required: 2, 11, 17.

² An appendix containing the text of these recommendations will be found at the end of the committee's report as printed in the *Publications of the American Statistical Association*.

mentations 30 and 32) of omitting from the main reports practically all text and publishing the tables as promptly as practicable. It was urged by the committee that whatever value the text prepared to accompany tables may possess—and such text is, if rapidly prepared, usually a mere repetition of figures and therefore colorless—it was outweighed by the delay occasioned in preparation and in the proof reading and printing. Thus the committee recommended the radical change of policy shown above, according to which the tables should be published as promptly as possible by themselves and should be followed by a series of special reports upon subjects derived from census returns that were most likely to be of practical importance to the American people, prepared under the supervision of the most competent experts obtainable. Further pursuing this subject, the committee recommended a tentative list of subjects (as given in Recommendation No. 39) and in response to the request of the director indicated a number of workers in statistics who would be competent to handle such reports.

In the opinion of the committee the creation of this advisory body has been amply justified should nothing else result from their labor than the carrying out of this carefully studied and fully worked out plan of publication and separation of census reports. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the defects which characterized previous policies of the bureau in these particulars. Much of the adverse criticism of the census has been due to such defects. A policy of publishing tables promptly, which means publishing results of the census at the earliest possible moment, and following these by a series of effective monographs, also published promptly, analyzing the more important census results in such a way as to make them intelligible and helpful to the largest number of people, would not only afford an effective substitute for a mass of unimportant text repetition of figures, misnamed interpretative, but would mark a great step in advance in the scientific treatment of census results. The attention of the two associations is especially invited by the joint committee to Recommendation 39, made at the last meeting of the committee and to the list of topics suggested to the Director of the Census as peculiarly timely or important. The recommendation and list are as follows:

39. The Committee desires to express gratification at the Director's approval of Recommendation 30, sections 3 to 6, advising that the Bureau should at once establish a policy of issuing special studies or monographs upon selected census topics of vital importance to the nation. It is increasingly of the conviction that these special studies are urgently needed to interpret the changes recorded in statistics of this disturbed period. The Committee further recommends that, as suggested by the Director, experts properly qualified to take up this important work under the supervision of Dr. Hill be secured at once. If called upon to do so, the Committee would be glad to cooperate by naming persons qualified to render such expert assistance.

As a tentative and partial list of subjects appropriate for such special studies, the Committee suggests the following titles:

- a. Shifting of population since 1910 between sections of the country and between city and country.
- b. The growth of cities.
- c. The American family.
- d. Foreign born population.

- e. Native population.
- f. School attendance and illiteracy.
- g. Child labor.
- h. Farm tenure, farm mortgages, and land values.
- i. Total and average farm production and farm income.
- j. Changes in farm crops and in live stock since 1910.
- k. Effect of the war on manufactures and mining.
- l. Total production in manufactures per wage earner.
- m. Size of manufacturing establishments and form of ownership.
- n. Integration and specification of industry.

It was the opinion of the committee that in publishing the results of the Thirteenth Census more emphasis had been laid upon the state than upon the subject, whereas it was felt that from the standpoint of the public and of scholars the state was a classification unit of decreasing importance and interest. This stress upon the state seemed to the committee to be a reversion to the census practice prior to 1860, when the state was the primary unit in the presentation of census results. While it was thought that, in order to meet the local demand for statistics for individual states, it might be wise to continue the state supplement, it appeared unnecessary to incorporate all the state bulletins in the final reports. On the other hand, the committee believed that the omission of the minor civil division table from the main reports at the last census had been a mistake and recommended that this table should be incorporated in Volume I of the final reports of the Fourteenth Census.

For these reasons the committee recommended collecting all the bulletins containing statistics of population, agriculture, manufactures, and mining for each state in separate state bulletins and dispensing with the final volumes by states for population, agriculture, and manufactures. The omission of these reports from the final volumes would save a large sum.

FORMAT OF CENSUS REPORTS

The Advisory Committee gave serious attention to the format of census reports and in considering this subject directed the preparation of a paper upon census publications which should review the general question of extent and cost of publications at the last three censuses and also discuss briefly the subject of distribution. This paper will be found as an appendix to the report of the committee. The conclusions derived from the discussions of the subject are embodied in Resolution 31, and offer a complete publishing policy.

Much discussion occurred over the relative merits of the octavo and quarto size as regards suitability for the requirements of the census publications. In the committee's opinion there was no question as to the superiority and value of the octavo size for reference and library use. The objection which has always interfered to prevent a change has been the inconvenience of readjusting census tables to the smaller size. For this reason the committee concluded that the quarto size should be retained during the Fourteenth Census, feeling it would be unwise in the midst of the pressure and strain of the census period

to undertake an experiment which might prove disastrous. The mere time and thought required for readjustment would be a distinct loss to already well advanced work. It was believed, however, that at the close of the Fourteenth Census period and with the taking up of intercensal special reports, the experiment as to the wisdom and effectiveness of the octavo as compared with the quarto size ought to be commenced. Should it prove a failure in connection with one or more minor inquiry, the embarrassment, delay, and expense would be comparatively small and would be well worth risking for the purpose of deciding upon the merits of the octavo size. On the other hand, if the latter should prove successful in connection with the minor reports, by the time the Fifteenth Census had arrived the bureau would have reached such familiarity with the smaller size and its difficulties as well as advantages that the change from quarto to octavo, if deemed advisable, could easily be made in connection with the next census reports.

In order to reduce so far as possible the inconvenience of the larger size, the committee urgently recommended that the paper used in the reports of the Fourteenth Census should be much thinner than has been used in reports of former censuses, pointing out the practicability and advantages of paper having a weight per ream of not more than 30 or 35 pounds, which would reduce the weight of the volumes by at least 25 per cent. Thus the reports of the Fourteenth Census, instead of being a bulky set of volumes, would be reduced by the practical elimination of text and the omission of certain state reports and still further by the use of thinner paper to a series of thin volumes easily handled and requiring comparatively little shelf space. This would be a boon to users and to libraries all over the country which should lead to the preservation of census reports where in the past their bulk has frequently prohibited their permanent retention. The committee further advised the publication of a limited number of the Fourteenth Census reports on all rag paper for permanent library preservation.

CHANGE OF DATE OF CENSUS

At the date of the first meeting of the committee, held February 10, 1919, the new law covering the taking of the Fourteenth Census was being crowded through Congress during the last days of the session. This bill passed the Senate on the last day of February, passed the House on the third day of March, and was signed by the President on the same day. Had it been possible to propose amendments, the committee might have advised fundamental changes in census inquiries and hence in schedules. By the time the committee was organized, however, the bill had advanced too far to permit any consideration of its provisions. The new law directed a radical change in the date established for taking the census. All of the censuses prior to 1910 had been consistently taken as of June 1, but in order to meet changing conditions in cities due to the departure of large numbers of persons

to the country by June 1, the date of the census of 1910 was changed to April 1. As this provision proved unsatisfactory for securing agricultural returns, January 1 was established in the new law as the date for taking the Fourteenth Census. When the subject was discussed at the hearings before the committees on the census of both Houses, arguments in favor of the change, especially the advantages resulting from a much more satisfactory date for agricultural statistics, were regarded by the bureau as outweighing the disadvantages. This was perhaps one of the provisions upon which, had the committee been in existence earlier, it might have advised a different decision, since the brief references to this subject which were made at the first meeting of the committee developed considerable skepticism as to the wisdom of the change of date. Aside from the practical aspects of the problem there will be a persisting error in consequence of this change due to the fact that the average user of statistics will make direct comparisons between the Fourteenth Census and the Thirteenth, Twelfth, or any other census without allowance for differences in the dates or in the length of the intercensal periods. A greater objection, however, has developed already in that the change in date from April to January is tending to embarrass the bureau, by adding to the cost of enumeration and by causing delay owing to the difficulties of travel in the midst of winter. It thus increases the burden upon officials already overburdened with the great task of taking the census.

THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE CENSUS

At the request of the Director of the Census the committee made an effort to advise in the selection of an Assistant Director of the Census to be appointed when the Census Act took effect July 1. Many names were suggested, but it was found that every one of those who were proposed by the committee was fully occupied elsewhere and unable to give consideration to the claims of the bureau. Subsequently the department and the director decided to invite Mr. Wm. M. Steuart to become Assistant Director of the Census. Being familiar with his excellent previous record as an official of the census for many years and having confidence in his ability to fill the position satisfactorily, the committee gave cordial approval to the nomination. Mr. Steuart began his work early in the summer and, with his knowledge of and experience in census work, has proved an invaluable acquisition to the bureau in preparing for the Fourteenth Census. The position of Assistant Director of the Census has always been a very difficult one. It is a temporary position which involves supervision of permanent officials and employees.

CENSUS DEFECTS

In presenting this report of progress it is appropriate to refer to certain phases of census problems which have impressed the committee.

Some lack of foresight and organization was shown by the Depart-

ment of Commerce in arranging for temporary accommodations in connection with the Fourteenth Census. According to the final adjustment the administrative offices remain in the permanent quarters of the bureau in the Department of Commerce Building at 19th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, but the entire producing force, soon to number several thousand clerks, is located in part of a temporary war building at 6th and B Streets, a mile and a half away. It is difficult to exaggerate the inconvenience and waste entailed by such an arrangement. All divisions of the bureau should be under one roof. It ought to be managed as an independent unit during the decennial census emergency. If this could not have been done, one of the war buildings nearer the department should have been secured.

Possibly, in passing, the committee may be allowed also to criticise weakness shown by the bureau itself in delaying to begin in proper season preparations for the enumeration. Little was done until the assistant director was appointed and took office. This resulted in pressure and some delay. It should be noted, however, that the period intervening between the date when the decennial census appropriation became available and the date of the census is three months shorter than at the last census and six months shorter than at the Twelfth Census.

Organization for the immense task of handling the field work and correspondence of the Population Census was also poor. At least one of the bureau divisions when next confronted by a decennial census enumeration should be completely reorganized by distribution of duties on the principle of modern business organizations of large magnitude. These, however, are details of administration for which the officials of the department or bureau naturally are responsible and were not and ought not be within the sphere of an advisory committee.

PECULIAR PROBLEMS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENSUS PERIOD

No director of the census in the past in undertaking a decennial enumeration has been confronted with such problems of scarcity of labor and cost of work as have fallen to the lot of the present director. Instead of receiving an excess of applications for employment on census work, he has encountered great difficulty in securing suitable supervisors and still greater difficulty in securing satisfactory enumerators in sufficient number. For the first time it has been found necessary to utilize the services of women in the latter activity. There are many localities in which the roll of the enumerators is still incomplete. To progress as far towards completing the quota as has been done, the bureau has been compelled to use the maximum compensation allowed by law for the payment of enumerators. It should be remembered, however, that the addition of only one cent to the per capita compensation allowed enumerators for taking the census represents an aggregate extra cost of more than one million dollars. At the outset the committee gave some attention to the matter of supervisors, and received the assurance of the director that it was the policy of the

bureau to secure the best possible men without consideration of political affiliations. The committee did not expect to insist on securing perfection, but has been entirely content if, with its advice and encouragement, the bureau has made progress in improving the personnel of supervisors. The subdivision of Massachusetts into eight supervisors' districts in substitution for one in the past was criticised by the committee and defended by the director as being in the interest of better administration. Since he was charged with responsibility for the conduct of the census the committee made no further criticism, feeling that he was the best judge of an operation for which he was himself responsible.

INCREASING DEMAND FOR CENSUS INFORMATION

The occurrence of the war greatly stimulated the demand for information of a statistical character relating to all manner of subjects. Much of this increased demand was a healthy growth indicating the increasing value of statistics in connection with all manner of activities. Hence, certain new inquiries ought to be encouraged. There should be, for example, a complete and accurate commercial census. A wealth of information and a vast store of statistics relating to department stores, drug stores, groceries, and all other leading trade activities could be secured, for which already there is an insistent demand. The committee has received appeals from a number of sources to advocate the preparation of such data. There is also a demand for greater detail or more frequent enumeration in connection with inquiries which are already authorized, such as those concerning specified important industries and certain agricultural products and operations.

On the other hand, the Director of the Census, while confronted with such demands, finds his own problems of administration greatly increased even though he confine his activities to exactly those which have been customary and long authorized by Congress; he must enumerate a steadily increasing population. He is, indeed, about to include in the census of 1920 at least twenty-five million more people with all their varied characteristics than did the director of the Twelfth Census in 1900. This means an increase in twenty years of practically one third in the magnitude of the task. He must secure an army of nearly one hundred thousand persons to aid him, when labor cannot be obtained easily for any known operation, public or private, except at greatly increased compensation; yet the pay which the Census Bureau offers is moderate in the extreme.

In the opinion of the committee the time is not far distant when the detail which it has been customary to offer in connection with the census of the United States must be sharply curtailed because of the mere magnitude of the task due to the growth of population and industry. It would be wise to recognize this fact and begin at an early date after the completion of the Fourteenth Census a careful and systematic study of the directions in which this curtailment can be ap-

plied. First, attention must be given to a number of tables, so as to secure a reduction which will cause the least loss and embarrassment to the users of statistics. It is evident that the great increase in cost which will unquestionably characterize the Fourteenth Census in common with every other operation, public or private, at this period, if it persists, will tend to hasten curtailment at some point.

PRACTICAL USEFULNESS OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ten months have now elapsed since the organization of the Advisory Committee and hence the beginning of its active coöperation with the Director of the Census. During this period the members have gladly contributed their time and best thought to the meetings. The actual cost to the government has been very small, covering only such traveling expenses as have been incurred, and a small part of the living expenses of members during meetings. The total outlay for a full year of committee activity will be considerably less than \$1000. What return has the bureau received for this investment and the time devoted by its officials to the demands of the advisory committee? Are there any concrete results to show for its labors? In short, has this joint advisory committee advanced the cause of closer coöperation by proving to be of real service?

The Director of the Census sums up his impression by saying that the work of the committee thus far has been of much service to him. He expresses the opinion that the members have formed an expert cabinet to which he was able to refer problems and from which he was certain to secure impartial advice.

The Assistant Director says that the impression he has received from his own brief observation and the comment of others has been that the committee has keyed up the officials of the bureau and steadied and encouraged them by forming an expert court of the last resort. Finally, the members of the committee themselves, who have given their time, frequently at much inconvenience, feel that it has been and is an experiment worth while. To have advised and persuaded the bureau to change the content policy with regard to census reports alone will mark a great advance and, by the omission of text, should effect the saving of a large sum.

Obviously the value of such an advisory body depends largely upon three essentials—knowledge of the subject, faithful consideration, and attendance. In those three essentials the joint advisory committee of the two Associations has not been lacking. The committee has pointed out to the director with much earnestness that he might make his administration noteworthy and of special service to the federal government and to the country by adopting such reasonable and far-reaching reforms in content and mechanical form as have been outlined. His response has been very cordial.

The committee has pleasure in reporting that during its brief existence it has conducted correspondence with representatives of various independent organizations which have written to the committee for in-

formation or assistance. Among these was the Chief of the Statistical Office of the Dominion of Canada, who submitted a copy of the Canadian Statistics Act and of the Regulations thereunder and expressed a desire to keep in touch with the committee and receive any reports that it might issue.

The future work of the Advisory Committee doubtless will be comprised in occasional meetings, probably less frequently held, during the coming year, to pass more in detail on form and content, and to advise on special reports, or other subjects, as the opportunity for service develops.

FOR THE AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION:

WILLIAM S. ROSSITER, *Chairman*,
CARROLL W. DOTEN,
EDWIN F. GAY.

FOR THE AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION:

WALTER F. WILLCOX,
WESLEY C. MITCHELL,
EDWIN R. A. SELIGMAN.